# Excerpt from Interview with Orion Samuelson

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Interviewer: Mark DePue



DePue: Well, you've alluded to something we'll get to here pretty quick, but before that happened, tell me a little bit about the chores that you had to do. What was your daily routine, especially chore-wise.

Samuelson: Okay, daily routine: up in the morning at about five o'clock and out to the barn and milk cows and generally help Dad clean the barn, and then change clothes and go to school. When I got home from school, no question, I didn't have to look around for something to do because it was throw silage down from the silo and get water to the calves, the dairy calves, and clean the pens, and do the work, and then we would milk the cows and generally be in out of the barn at about eight o'clock at night. And then if there was homework, do the homework, and then off to bed. And before electricity came on the scene, we would do this by Aladdin lamp and kerosene lantern. Why we never burned the barn down, I'll never know—you know, carrying that open-flame kerosene lantern up into the hay mow—but we didn't. We had some lighting strikes on the barn, but it never burned, and so that was sort of a typical day. And then in the summertime, it was out in the field doing everything from oat harvest to hay harvest and all. We weren't baling hay; it was loose hay that would come up onto the wagon, and you'd take into the hay mow.

DePue: Wanted to ask you a couple more questions about going to school in a one-room schoolhouse, because kids today can't even begin to comprehend what that was like.

Samuelson: No.

DePue: You walked to school?

Samuelson: Walked to school, yeah.

DePue: How far was that?

Samuelson: It was a mile, and during World War II, when we had Daylight Saving Time the year 'round, I can remember walking to school almost in the

dark because I'd leave for school at 8:00 and the sun wouldn't come up until after 8:00 because of Daylight Saving Time. And I can remember mornings when it was thirty-five below zero, and we'd still walk to school. If we'd had a snowstorm—and we would get them—we were a mile from a main road, and we had some winters where the snow would be so heavy, we'd be snowed in for three weeks before the plows could plow us out, so then we'd haul the cans of milk to the main road with the horses and the sleigh. And some of those cold mornings, they would take my sister and me to school in that sleigh, pulled by the team of horses—Buster and Blackie.

DePue: That leads to another question. I'm going to get back to the education here in a bit, but apparently you had draft horses on the farm when you were growing up as well.

Samuelson: Yeah. I didn't like them; they didn't like me. (laughter) We never got along very well. And we did have a Samson tractor, which was about as clunky a tractor as you would ever find—no power steering or anything like that. Years later, I found it was built in a plant in Janesville, Wisconsin that later became the General Motors plant. And we had that, but it would break down, so the two horses were basically our main source of power for farming on the farm. They'd pull the hay mower, and they'd pull the hay wagon, and they'd do most of the work.

DePue: Plowing?

Samuelson: Plowing, did that. Yep, they'd pull the plow; they'd pull the cultivator. They really were the main source of power, because that old Samson tractor didn't have a cultivator. It would pull a plow, but that was about it.

DePue: What was the primary source of income. Was it the dairy cattle?

Samuelson: The milk check. Milk check was the fifty-two-week source of income, but we grew tobacco.